

Message Text

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43

ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AF-05 EUR-06 IO-09 IGA-02 EB-05 L-03

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SS-07 /107 W

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O 311740 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1342

INFO COMSIXTHFLT

CINCEUR

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USINT ALGIERS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASY BONN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

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AIDAC FOR AID DISASTER RELIEF COORDINATOR

E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: SWEL, TS

SUBJECT: SITREP NO. 6

REF' S: A. TUNIS 1713 B. TUNIS 1715

1. FOLLOWING REVIEW OF OVERALL SITUATION AFTERNOON
MARCH 31 BY AMBASSADOR AND REAR ADMIRAL TURNER, DECISION
TAKEN THAT USS FORRESTAL AND THREE SUPPORTING SHIPS
WOULD DEPART TUNIS APPROXIMATELY 2000 MARCH 31. GOT (SEC GEN
BALY, MINISTRY OF DEFENSE) WAS INFORMED AND INDICATED
CONCURRENCE. THUS FINAL FLIGHT OF SIXTH FLEET HELICOPTERS
PARTICIPATING IN RELIEF OPERATION TOOK PLACE AFTERNOON
MARCH 31.

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2. HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN SOME DISCUSSION DURING DAY OF POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL TUNISIAN REQUIREMENT: LIFTING OF TUNISIAN BAILEY BRIDGES BY U. S. CH-53 HELICOPTERS TO REPLACE BRIDGES WASHED OUT IN FLOOD. MATTER FIRST AROSE IN DISCUSSION BETWEEN AMBASSADOR AND MOHAMED SAYAH, MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. WE HAVE RECEIVED NO OFFICIAL GOT REQUEST FOR SUCH ASSISTANCE AS YET, AND IN SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSIONS BELIEVE WE CAN DISCOURAGE POSSIBILITY AND ADVISE TRANSPORTING BRIDGES BY TRUCK. IF THIS PROVES IMPOSSIBLE, POSSIBILITY STILL REMAINS OF ON- GOING TUNISIAN REQUIREMENT, AND ADMIRAL TURNER HAS STATED THAT USS PONCE COULD RETURN TO TUNIS LATER TO ASSIST. WE AWARE OF ADDITIONAL COST FACTOR.

3. U. S. HELICOPTERS CONTINUED OPERATIONS MARCH 31. SIXTEEN ITALIAN HELICOPTERS WERE ALSO SCHEDULED TO OPERATE, AND FRENCH HELICOPTER CARRIER ARROMANCHES ARRIVED FROM TOULON DURING AFTERNOON WITH 11 ADDITIONAL HELICOPTERS. LIBYAN AND TUNISIAN HELICOPTERS ALSO OPERATING, MAKING TOTAL OF SOME 40 HELICOPTERS AVAILABLE FOR OPERATIONS TODAY.

4. PROBLEM HAS BEEN, THEREFORE, NOT TRANSPORT FACILITIES, BUT AVAILABILITY OF SUPPLIES TO CARRY TO STRICKEN AREAS. WAREHOUSE AT AIRPORT SOMETIMES VIRTUALLY EMPTY DURING DAY; SOME OF US HELICOPTERS RETURNED TO FORRESTAL BECAUSE OF LACK OF MISSIONS.

5. SITREP FROM COMMANDER SIXTH FLEET TASK FORCE 60 DTG 311141 Z (BEING REPEATED SECSTATE) PROVIDES DETAILS OF OPERATIONS MARCH 31, AS WELL AS INFO ON WEATHER AND FLOOD CONDITIONS.

6. WE VERIFIED WITH GOT NEED FOR 500 TENTS AND 20,000 BLANKETS SCHEDULED ARRIVE 0100 APRIL 2 LOCAL TIME. GOT ASSURES THAT NEED EXISTS, AND USAID RECONNAISSANCE MISSION (REF A) HAS CONFIRMED. ARRANGEMENTS MADE TO RECEIVE CARGO.

7. AT 4:30 THIS AFTERNOON, MARCH 31, PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA DECORATED ADMIRAL TURNER, COMMANDER OF TASK FORCE 60, AND CAPTAIN LINDER, CAPTAIN OF USS FORRESTAL, IN CONNECTION WITH RESCUE EFFORTS. AMBASSADOR ACCOMPANIED. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA WAS EXTREMELY EFFUSIVE IN HIS

EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION FOR U. S. MILITARY EFFORT. WITH CONSIDERABLE FORECEFULNESS AND EMOTION, HE STRESSED HIS LONG- STANDING AND DEEP FRIENDSHIP WITH THE U. S. -- STATING THIS WENT BACK SOME 40 YEARS -- AND COMMENTED THAT USG IS FRIEND HE CAN COUNT ON IN TIME OF NEED. IN STRESSING IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHES TO US- TUNISIAN RELATIONS, HE REFERRED TO INDISPENSABLE SUPPORT PROVIDED BY U. S. SIXTH FLEET. HE CALLED IT NOT ONLY A SHIELD FOR EUROPE BUT ALSO FOR NORTH AFRICA. IN EXPRESSING HIS APPRECIATION HE STRESSED EXPEDITIOUSNESS OF USG SUPPORT -- WHICH HAD BEEN SO VITAL IN FIRST TWO DAYS OF DISASTER. (FIRST U. S. HELICOPTERS WERE ON GROUND IN TUNIS 17 HOURS AFTER PRIME MINISTER MADE REQUEST TO AMBASSADOR AND 15 1/2 HOURS AFTER AMBASSADOR CALLED SIXTH FLEET COMMANDER, ADMIRAL MILLER.) IN OTHER CEREMONIES PRESIDENT PRESENTED MEDALS TO LIBYAN OFFICERS AND TO TWO ITALIAN NAVAL OFFICERS.

8. WE CONTINUE TO RECEIVE EXTREMELY FAVORABLE PUBLICITY FOR RAPID U. S. RESPONE TO GOT REQUEST. VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW' S MESSAGE TO BOURGUIBA PROMINENTLY PRINTED IN NEWSPAPERS MARCH 31, AND WE EXPECT THAT PRESIDENT NIXON' S MESSAGE TO BOURGUIBA AND SECRETARY ROGER' S MESSAGE TO MASMOUDI WILL RECEIVE SIMILAR PUBLICITY TOMORROW. THIS HAS PROVEN TO BE GREAT BOOST TO OUR IMAGE HERE AT PARTICULARLY OPPORTUNE MOMENT.

9. THIS WILL BE LAST REGULAR SITREP IN THIS SERIES UNLESS CONDITIONS CHANGE DRASTICALLY OR NEW REQUIREMENTS ARE RECEIVED.
SEELYE

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